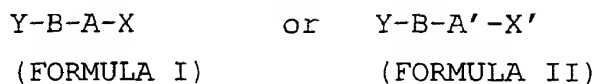


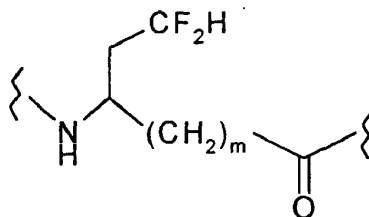
CLAIMS:

1. A fluorine containing oligopeptide of formula:



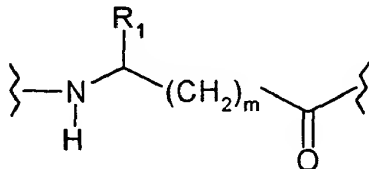
wherein:

A is an amino acid residue of formula:



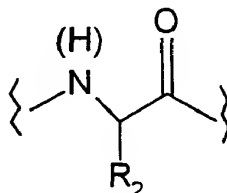
where m is 0 or 1.

A' is an amino acid residue of formula



where m is 0, or 1 and R₁ is a fluorine-substituted hydrocarbyl side chain containing from 1 to 15 carbon atoms;

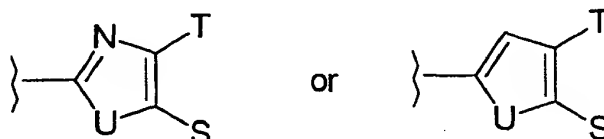
B is a naturally or non-naturally occurring amino acid residue of formula:



wherein R_2 contains from 1 to 20 carbon atoms is a non-polar, or polar but uncharged sidechain or is a side chain containing an acidic functionality;

X is selected from the following:

- 5 $-\text{CO}_2\text{R}_8$; $-\text{H}$; $-\text{OR}_8$; $-\text{CF}_3$; $-\text{CONR}_9\text{R}_{10}$; $-\text{CF}_2\text{CONR}_9\text{R}_{10}$; $-\text{NH.SO}_2\text{R}_{25}$ or a heterocyclic group of formula:



10 wherein U is sulphur, oxygen or NR_{11} ; R_8 , R_9 , R_{10} , R_{11} and R_{25} are, independently, hydrogen or a lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, aryl, or aralkyl group, and S and T are each independently either H or R_{12} , where R_{12} is a lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, aryl or aralkyl group, or can together form a ring;

15 X' is OH or $-\text{NHSO}_2\text{R}_{25}$, where R_{25} is as defined above; and Y is selected from (i) and (ii) below:

(i) Z-F-E-D-C-

20 wherein C is a natural or non-natural amino acid residue having a non-polar, polar but uncharged, or acidic side chain containing from 1 to 20 carbon atoms;

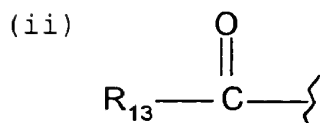
D may be absent, but where present is a natural or non-natural amino acid having a hydrophobic side chain containing 1 to 20 carbon atoms;

25 E may be absent, but where present is a natural or non-natural amino acid having an acidic side chain containing from 1 to 20 carbon atoms, or is a dicarboxylic acid containing up to 10 carbon atoms;

30 F may be absent, but where present is a natural or non-natural amino acid having an acidic side chain

containing from 1 to 20 carbon atoms, or is a dicarboxylic acid containing up to 10 carbon atoms; and

Z may be absent, -H, or a group of formula R_7CO- , where R_7 is a group containing from 1 to 20 carbon atoms which is chosen such that the group R_7CO- together with the nitrogen atom to which it is attached forms an amide, urethane or urea linkage;



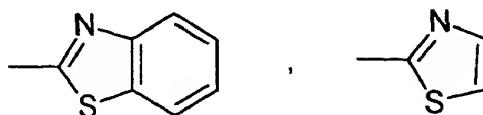
where R_{13} is an aliphatic or aromatic group containing from 1 to 25, carbon atoms and 0-5 oxygen atoms, 0-3 nitrogen atoms, 0 to 2 sulphur atoms and up to 9 other heteroatoms which may be the same or different;

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or ester thereof.

2. An oligopeptide of Formula II or a salt or ester thereof according to claim 1 wherein R_1 is selected from:



3. An oligopeptide of Formula I or a salt or ester thereof according to claim 1 wherein X is selected from: $-\text{CO}_2\text{H}$, $-\text{CONHCH}_2\text{Ph}$, $-\text{H}$, $-\text{OH}$, $-\text{NHSO}_2\text{R}_{25}$ (where R_{25} is as defined in claim 1),

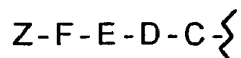


4. An oligopeptide of Formula I or a salt or ester thereof according to claim 3 wherein X is selected from: -H; -OH; -COOH, and -NHSO₂R₂₅.

5. An oligopeptide of Formula I or ^{claim 1}II or a salt or ester thereof according to ~~any one of the preceding~~ claims wherein B is selected from: glutamic acid and aspartic acid, 2-aminobutyric acid, 4,4-difluoro-2-aminobutyric acid, alanine, isoleucine, valine, leucine, cysteine, phenylalanine, naphthylalanine, β -cyclohexylalanine, and proline.

6. An oligopeptide, salt or ester according to claim 5 wherein B is selected from β -cyclohexylalanine, leucine, glutamic acid and 4,4-difluoro-2-aminobutyric acid.

7. An oligopeptide, salt or ester according to ^{claim 1}~~any one of the preceding claims,~~ wherein Y is a group of formula:



and C is selected from: alanine, isoleucine, leucine, phenylalanine, valine, norleucine, norvaline, glutamic acid, glutamine, aspartic acid, α -t-butyl glycine, α -cinnamylglycine, homoleucine, 3,5 dichlorophenylalanine 2-thienylalanine, 3-bromophenylalanine and α -cyclopentyl glycine.

8. An oligopeptide, salt or ester according to claim 7 wherein C is selected from: isoleucine, glutamic acid, α -cyclopentylglycine, t-butyl glycine and valine.

9. An oligopeptide, salt or ester according to claim 7 ~~or claim 8~~ wherein D is selected from: methionine, isoleucine, leucine, norleucine, valine, methyl valine,

phenylglycine or diphenylalanine.

10. An oligopeptide, salt or ester according to claim 9 wherein D is leucine or diphenylalanine.

5

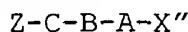
11. An oligopeptide, salt or ester according to claim 9 ~~or claim 10~~ wherein E is selected from glutamic acid, aspartic acid, succinic acid and glutaric acid.

10

12. An oligopeptide, salt or ester according to claim 11 wherein F is selected from glutamic acid, aspartic acid, succinic acid and glutaric acid.

13. A tripeptide of formula:

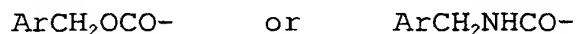
15



in which A, B, C and Z are as defined in claim 1 and X'' is a carboxylic acid group ($-CO_2H$), amide group ($-CONR_9R_{10}$) or hydrogen; or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or ester thereof.

20

14. A tripeptide, salt or ester according to claim 13 in which Z is a lower alkyloxy group or a group of formula:



wherein Ar is an optionally substituted aryl group.

25

15. A tripeptide, salt or ester according to claim 13 ~~or 14~~ wherein the amino acid B is selected from: cyclohexylalanine, leucine, α -aminobutyric acid, 4,4-difluoro-2-aminobutyric acid and phenyl alanine.

30

16. A tripeptide, salt or ester according to ^{claim 13} ~~any one of claims 13 to 15~~ wherein the amino acid C is selected from: alanine, isoleucine, leucine, phenylalanine, valine, norleucine, norvaline, glutamic acid, glutamine, aspartic acid, α -t-butyl glycine, styrylalanine,

35

homoleucine, 3,5 dichlorophenylalanine, 2-thienylalanine, 3-bromophenylalanine and α -cyclopentyl glycine.

17. A tripeptide according to ^{claim} ~~any one of claims 13 to 16~~

5 wherein the combination of amino acids C-B is selected from:

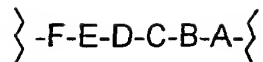
isoleucine - cyclohexylalanine
 isoleucine - leucine
 isoleucine - α -aminobutyric acid
 10 isoleucine - phenylalanine
 leucine - leucine
 phenylalanine - leucine
 valine - leucine
 norleucine - leucine
 15 norvaline - leucine
 glutamic acid - leucine
 glutamine - leucine
 n-butylaspartic acid - leucine
 aspartic acid - leucine
 20 t-butyl glycine - leucine
 glutamic acid - 4,4 difluoro-2-aminobutyric acid
 α -cinnamyl glycine - leucine
 homoleucine - leucine
 2-thienylalanine - leucine
 25 3-bromophenylalanine - leucine
 α -cyclopentylglycine - leucine.

18. A hexapeptide, salt or ester according to claim 1 having the formula:

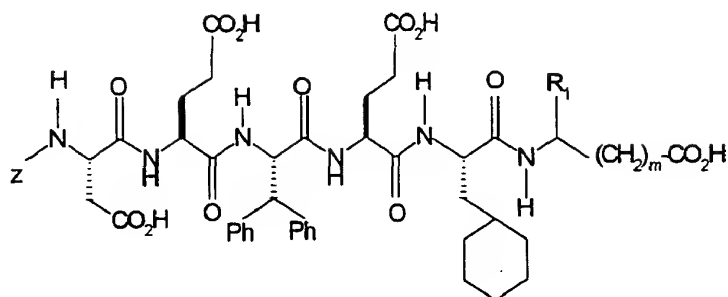
30 $Z-F-E-D-C-B-A-X$ or $Z-F-E-D-C-B-A'-X'$

where A-F, X and Z, A' and X' are as defined in claim 1.

19. A hexapeptide, salt or ester according to claim 18 wherein the group

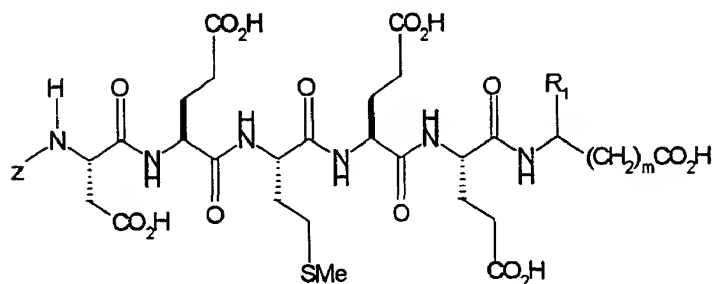


is selected from:



5

and



20. A fluorine containing dipeptide according to Formula I of claim 1 wherein:

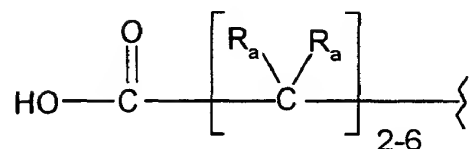
X is -COOH;

B is leucine; and

10 Y is a group of formula $R_{13}CO-$ where R_{13} is as defined in claim 1;
or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt or ester thereof.

21. A dipeptide, salt, or ester according to claim 20

wherein R_{13} is a group of general formula

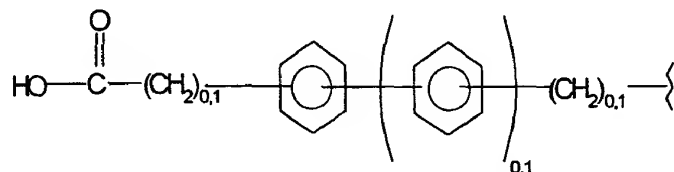


wherein each R_a is independently selected from hydrogen,
lower alkyl, lower alkenyl, lower alkoxy, optionally
5 substituted aryl or aralkyl groups or two R_a taken
together result in the formation of a three to seven
membered aliphatic or aromatic ring which optionally
contains at least one heteroatom.

10 22. A dipeptide, salt or ester according to claim 21
wherein at least one group $-\text{C}(\text{R}_a)_2-$ is replaced by $-\text{O}-$.

23. A dipeptide, salt or ester according to claim 21
wherein R_{13} is a group of formula:

15



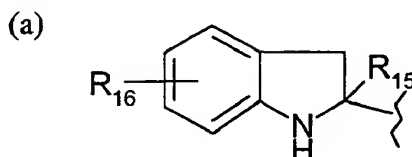
24. A dipeptide salt or ester according to claim 20
wherein R_{13} is a group of formula:

20



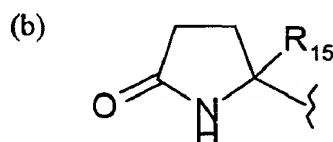
where R_{14} is a cycloalkyl or optionally substituted aryl
group.

25. A dipeptide salt or ester according to claim 20
wherein R_{13} is a group selected from:



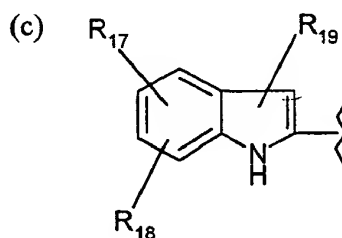
5 where R_{15} is hydrogen, an optionally branched, optionally
interrupted and optionally substituted lower alkyl or
lower alkenyl group or an optionally substituted aralkyl
group, R_{16} is hydrogen or an optionally substituted and
optionally interrupted lower alkoxy or aryloxy- group;

10



where R_{15} is as defined above; and

15



where each of R_{17} , R_{18} and R_{19} , independently, is selected
from hydrogen, optionally substituted lower alkyl, lower
alkenyl and lower alkoxy, optionally substituted aryl,
aralkyl, aryloxy or aralkoxy, a carboxylic acid group
optionally as its lower alkyl ester, a halogen, cyano, or

20

CF₃ group.

26. A fluorine containing oligopeptide, salt or ester
according to any one of the preceding claims for
5 therapeutic use.

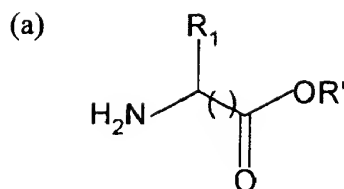
27. The use of a fluorine containing oligopeptide, salt
or ester of any one of the preceding claims for the
manufacture of a medicament ~~for use in inhibiting the HCV~~
10 NS3 protease, and/or for use in treating or preventing
hepatitis C or a related condition.

28. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a fluorine
containing oligopeptide, salt or ester according to ^{claim} ~~any~~
15 ~~one of claims 1 to 25~~ and a pharmaceutically acceptable
excipient, diluent or carrier.

29. A method of inhibiting HCV NS3 protease activity,
and/or of treating or preventing hepatitis C or a related
20 condition, the method comprising administering to a human
or animal subject, a therapeutically or prophylactically
effective amount of a composition according to claim 28,
~~or of a fluorine containing oligopeptide salt or ester of~~
~~any one of claims 1 to 25.~~

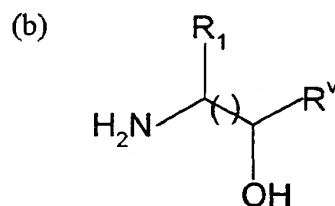
25 30. A method for the production of a compound of ^{claim} ~~any one~~
~~of claims 1 to 25~~ comprising reaction of a compound of
formula Y-NH-CHR₂-CO₂H where R₂ is as defined in claim 1,
optionally in a protected form, with an amine coreactant
30 selected from:

ADD
A



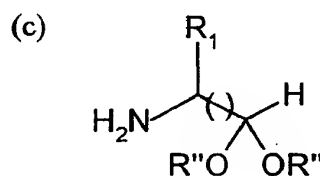
FORMULA K

where R' is a protecting group for a carboxylic acid group and R₁ is as defined in claim 1 and a (-CH₂-) group is optionally present at the position marked by brackets;



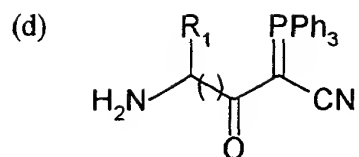
FORMULA L

where R₁ is as defined in claim 1, and R^v is a group corresponding to, or convertible to X or X' of claim 1, and a (-CH₂-) group is optionally present at the position marked by brackets;



FORMULA M

wherein R₁ is as defined in claim 1 and R'' is a lower alkyl group and a (-CH₂-) group is optionally present at the position marked by brackets; and



FORMULA N

wherein R₁ is as defined in claim 1 and a (-CH₂-) group is
5 optionally present at the position marked by brackets.